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Washington, DC 20515

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Opening Statement of
Chairman Doug Lamborn
Before the Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee
Legislative Hearing on:

- HR ____ : (Stivers)** “American-Made Energy and Infrastructure Jobs Act”
HR ____ : (Hastings of WA and Young of AK) “Alaskan Energy for American Jobs Act”
HR ____ : (Lamborn) “Protecting Investment in Oil Shale the Next Generation of Environmental, Energy, and Resource Security Act” (PIONEERS Act)
HR ____ : (Johnson of OH) “Coal Miner Employment and Domestic Energy Infrastructure Protection Act”

Friday November 18, 2011 at 9:30 a.m.

Today the Subcommittee is considering a package of bills designed to create and save jobs, open American lands for energy development, and generate new revenue for the American treasury. Combined these bills provide one of the largest single actions Congress could take to promote American energy security.

Using our federal lands for energy production is critical to our national security. These resources are the property of the American people and it is only by opening these lands and promoting their development that will bring forth the value of the minerals on these lands.

While there are a number of bills before the Committee today, I would like to begin with the Protecting Investment in Oil Shale the Next Generation of Environmental, Energy, and Resource Security Act – or PIONEERS Act that will facilitate the development of our oil shale resources in the United States.

Our nation is blessed with some of the largest, richest deposits of oil shale in the entire world. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the Western United States may hold more than 1.5 trillion barrels of oil – six times Saudi Arabia’s proven resources, and enough to provide the United States with energy for the next 200 years. Furthermore, it is estimated that 350,000 American jobs could be created by the development of our oil shale.

Unfortunately, the policies of this Administration have actively harmed both research and development of oil shale. After changing oil shale lease terms, making them so limited that there was practically no interest in the land offered by the Bureau of Land Management, and announcing they would be re-reviewing the current rules for commercial leasing, the Administration has stifled oil shale development and research.

At a field hearing this year held by our Subcommittee in Grand Junction, Colorado, we heard testimony from numerous witnesses stating that consistent policies and regulatory certainty were greatly needed in order to advance oil shale in the United States. My legislation aims to open up land for both research and commercial development of oil shale and create stable policies that the industry can rely on to create good-paying jobs for Americans, contribute to our energy security, and decrease our dependency on foreign oil. Just Wednesday, Secretary Salazar said there were many questions still surrounding oil shale development. I agree, however, the Secretary's response has been to inject confusion and restrict research. This bill takes a different tack, instead it will provide certainty and promote research. Companies were planning large investments in Colorado, however, many are now working with and investing in other nations like Estonia and Jordan.

Another bill before us today is the Coal Miner Employment and Domestic Energy Infrastructure Protection Act. The bill limits the authority of the Secretary of the Interior to issue new burdensome regulations under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 until December 31, 2011. This will stop the reckless rush of rulemaking by the Office of Surface Mining that has resulted in millions of wasted dollars and confusion by all parties to the real impacts of the ongoing rulemaking by the OSM. Instead, this time out will give OSM time to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act and generate a legally defensible regulation and to hear and address the concerns raised by the cooperating agencies, coal mining states, citizens and industry. Concerns that were raised in the April Budget oversight hearing for the Office of Surface Mining and subsequent oversight hearings on the Obama Administration's re-write of the Stream Buffer Zone Rule.

Broad concern was raised after chapters of the draft environmental impact statement showed potential job losses in the neighborhood of 7,000 coal mine jobs and a reduction in coal production in 22 states. The Administration has backed away from their job loss estimates and began to publically criticize the contractor hired by OSM to prepare the EIS. Eventually OSM and the contractor, Polu Kai, came to a mutual agreement to terminate the contract. As one might imagine, while OSM blames the contractor for problems with the EIS the contractor has raised concerns with OSM's management of the process in particular the numerous changes to the scope of the rule the EIS was to support.

Today we will hear from two of the subcontractors, Steven Gardner and Joe Zaluski, who worked for Polu Kai Services on the Administration's rewrite of the Stream Buffer Zone Rule. I look forward to their testimony and hearing a different perspective on the rule making process.

I know Chairman Hastings is here today and I expect he will talk more about the other two bills before the Committee, so I will end my comments with just one last thought.

Americans are desperate for new jobs and blue collar workers in our trades have been particularly hard hit by the economic downturn. Critics will say that these bills are a give away to the oil industry. Nothing could be further from the truth, these bills are designed to open lands to create opportunity. Opportunity for companies to pay billions of dollars to the treasury, for the right to hire millions of new workers to explore, discover and develop these resources. Workers who are experts in the skilled trades: craftsmen, pipefitters, electricians. Workers who will have good paying jobs, with benefits, to feed and support their families. I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today.